

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1545
WHITEHOUSE IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USUN NEW YORK 02106

EXDIS

WHITE HOUSE PASS NSC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CU, AO, CG, WA
SUBJECT: CUBAN-US RELATIONS AND CUBAN ACTIVITY IN
AFRICA

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR YOUNG MET WITH CUBAN VICE
PRESIDENT CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ TO DISCUSS WESTERN
INITIATIVES ON NAMIBIA. RODRIGUEZ EXPRESSED DISMAY
AND CONCERN OVER RECENT US STATEMENTS AND PRESS
ARTICLES ON CUBA IN AFRICA. HE DENIED CUBAN INVOLVE-
MENT IN SHABA, SAYING THE INVASION WAS IN NEITHER
CUBAN NOR ANGOLAN INTEREST. HE URGED THAT THE US
BASE ITS POLICY JUDGEMENTS CONCERNING CUBA AND
AFRICA ON REALITIES AND NOT ON RUMORS AND SUSPICION.
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HE URGED THAT BOTH COUNTRIES TRY TO IMPROVE THE
CLIMATE FOR US-CUBAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR YOUNG MET WITH CUBAN VICE PRESIDENT
CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ MAY 24 TO DISCUSS THE
WESTERN INITIATIVES ON NAMIBIA AND INFORM THE
CUBANS THE US HOPED THAT THEY AND THE ANGOLANS WOULD

COOPERATE IN ADVANCING THE NAMIBIAN NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. RODRIGUEZ WAS ACCOMPANIED BY CUBAN UN PERMREP RAUL ROA KOURI AND TEOFILO ACOSTA, FIRST SECRETARY, CUBAN INTEREST SECTION IN WASHINGTON. COOKS AND BLACKEN ACCOMPANIED YOUNG.

3. RODRIGUEZ, AFTER EXCHANGING GREETINGS, REMARKED THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT WAS CONFUSED, UPSET, AND ANGRY OVER REPORTED STATEMENTS BY UNITED STATES LEADERS WHICH HAD APPEARED IN THE PRESS FALSELY ACCUSING CUBA OF CERTAIN ACTIONS AND DISTORTING ITS INTENTIONS IN AFRICA. HE THEN HURRIEDLY ADDED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING.

4. RODRIGUEZ MENTIONED THAT THE CUBANS WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO A VISIT BY AMBASSADOR YOUNG TO CUBA; HOWEVER, HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT WAS NOT GHT YET. THE CUBANS WOULD LIKE TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH DISCUSSIONS AND RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES ARE CONDUCTED. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT OUR TWO COUNTRIES HAVE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO PROBLEMS IN AFRICA BUT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF THINGS IN WHICH WE HAD PARALLEL INTERESTS. RECENTLY THE ISSUES HAD BECOME CONFUSED AND THE CUBANS THOUGHT WE SHOULD WORK TO CLARIFY
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5. AMBASSADOR YOUNG COMMENTED THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'S REACTION TO CUBA AND CUBAN POLICIES IN AFRICA WAS COMPLEX, AND DIFFICULT FOR FOREIGNERS TO UNDERSTAND. RODRIGUEZ RESPONDED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED OVER STATEMENTS MADE BY UNITED STATES OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN. AMBASSADOR YOUNG EXPLAINED THE ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP EXISTING BETWEEN THE PRESS CORPS AND THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN TENDED TO RESULT IN UNBALANCED AND DRAMATIC PRESS TREATMENT OF POLICY STATEMENTS. YOUNG ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO CUBA AND TO CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA HAD BEEN OBJECTIVE AND BALANCED. RODRIGUEZ NODDED AGREEMENT.

6. YOUNG SAID THAT THE EVENTS IN ZAIRE HAD BEEN EXTREMELY UPSETTING. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT MILITARY SOLUTIONS WERE NOT POSSIBLE IN AFRICA. NO COUNTRY'S INTEREST WOULD BE SERVED BY VIOLENCE. ANY EXTERNAL POWER WITH RESOURCES COULD BACK A DISSIDENT GROUP

IN ALMOST ANY AFRICAN COUNTRY AND CONVERT THAT GROUP INTO A DESTABILIZING FORCE FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THAT COUNTRY. HE ASSERTED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT ENGAGED IN DESTABILIZATION IN ANGOLA. RODRIGUEZ INTERRUPTED SAYING "BUT YOU ARE PREPARING TO DO SO". AMBASSADOR YOUNG SAID THIS WAS NOT THE CASE, BUT

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HE COULD SEE HOW CERTAIN STATEMENTS COULD BE
INTERPRETED IN THAT FASHION.

7. RODRIGUEZ COMMENTED THAT IT WAS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS FOR ALL CONCERNED WHEN A NATION ENGAGED IN MILITARY ATTACKS OR DESTABILIZING EFFORTS. DURING THE PAST YEAR THE CUBANS HAD PERCEIVED THAT AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD AFRICA, ESPECIALLY AS REFLECTED IN STATEMENTS BY SECRETARY VANCE AND AMBASSADOR YOUNG, WAS REALISTIC. POLICY HAD BEEN CONDUCTED IN A QUIET AND PATIENT MANNER. BUT RECENTLY THERE HAD BEEN A TENDENCY, REFLECTED THROUGH THE US PRESS, TOWARD EXAGGERATION, SPREADING FALSEHOODS, AND THE "CREATING OF SCANDALS"

CONCERNING CUBAN POLICY AND DEVELOPMENTS IN AFRICA.
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HAD NOT BEEN REPORTING THE TRUTH
ABOUT CUBA. THERE WERE NO CUBAN TROOPS IN ERITREA.
YET THIS IS THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRESS WAS FALSELY
GIVING. CUBA IS NOT ENGAGED IN ANYTHING "DANGEROUS"
IN AFRICA.

8. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S COMMENT THAT IT
WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO TELL WHAT WAS GOING ON IN
ZAIRE, RODRIGUEZ AGREED, BUT ADDED THAT HE KNEW WHAT
WAS NOT GOING ON. CUBA WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE SHABA
INVASION OR WITH THE INVADERS. THERE WAS A DANGER
IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY US OFFICIALS WHICH, IN EFFECT
CALLED FIDEL A LIAR.

9. RODRIGUEZ TALKED AT LENGTH EXPLAINING THAT CUBA'S
POLICIES AND ACTIONS HAD A MORAL BASIS. RATHER
THAN LIE, CASTRO WOULD NOT DISCUSS AN ISSUE, BUT WHEN
HE SPEAKS OUT HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH. WHEN A SITUATION
IS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE HE WILL REFUSE TO HAVE AN
INTERVIEW RATHER THAN GET PLACED IN A POSITION WHERE
HE WOULD HAVE TO LIE.

10. RODRIGUEZ EMPHATICALLY REPEATED "WE ARE NOT
INVOLVED IN ZAIRE; WE HAVE NO RELATIONS WITH THE
KATANGANS. TWO YEARS AGO WE DID PROVIDE SOME TRAINING
AND ARMS, BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO PROVISION OF ARMS OR
TRAINING FOR THE PRESENT OPERATION." HE SAID THAT THE
INVASION OF SHABA CREATED DANGERS FOR ANGOLA AND FOR
CUBAN INTERESTS IN AFRICA. THE CUBANS WERE CONVINCED
THAT NETO HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SITUATION IN SHABA.
RODRIGUEZ ADDED THAT HE KNOWS THE SOVIET UNION IS ALSO
WORRIED. THEY KNOW THERE ARE SOME SOVIET ARMS IN THE
HANDS OF THE REBELS. CONFUSION EXISTS CONCERNING THEIR
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(THE SOVIETS) MOTIVATION. RODRIGUEZ REPEATED "THEY
(SOVIETS) ARE SERIOUSLY WORRIED".

11. THE CONVERSATION TURNED BACK TO NAMIBIA. AMBASSADOR
YOUNG STATED THAT THE HOPE OF THE US RESTED IN THE
EMERGENCE OF AN INDEPENDENT AND NATIONALIST NAMIBIA.
EVEN IF IT WERE NOT CONTROLLED BY SWAPO, SUCH A NAMIBIA
SHOULD GIVE ANGOLA A SENSE OF SECURITY.

12. AMBASSADOR YOUNG EXPRESSED WORRY THAT THE CONFLICT IN SHABA AND ITS AFTERMATH WERE CREATING CONFUSION AND INSTABILITY, NOT JUST IN ZAIRE BUT ALSO IN SURROUNDING COUNTRIES. THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN ZAIRE MIGHT STIMULATE A FLOW OF REFUGEES INTO ZAMBIA AND ELSEWHERE. THE US HOPED THAT CUBA AND ANGOLA WOULD COOPERATE IN ADVANCING THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN NAMIBIA. THIS COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR US DISCUSSIONS ON NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA. ALL PARTIES INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

13. RODRIGUEZ ASSERTED STRONGLY THAT CUBA WAS NOT IN AFRICA TO OPPOSE THE UNITED STATES. ITS POLICY HAS CERTAIN PRINCIPLES SUCH AS SUPPORTING NATIONAL LIBERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. CUBA SAW A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO PLAY WHICH WAS NOT IN CONFLICT WITH CUBAN INTEREST.

14. AMBASSADOR YOUNG COMMENTED THAT UNITED STATES INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY HAVING STRONG INDEPENDENT AND TRULY NON-ALIGNED STATES IN AFRICA. WE ARE NOT ABLE FINANCIALLY TO PROP-UP WEAK GOVERNMENTS AND ECONOMIES ALL OVER AFRICA. WE COULD PARTICIPATE MOST EFFECTIVELY THROUGH PRIVATE ENTERPRISE NOT THE US GOVERNMENT. PRIVATE ENTERPRISE COULD BE FLEXIBLE IN

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WORKING OUT BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE VARIOUS NATIONS IN AFRICA. RODRIGUEZ NODDED ASSENT AND SAID THAT THE CUBANS AHD ADVISED NETO TO KEEP GULF OIL IN CABINDA. HE SAID THEY MADE A DISTINCTION, HOWEVER, BETWEEN "PRIVATE MEANS AND US PRIVATE INVESTMENT" (IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHAT HE MEANT).

15. RETURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF NAMIBIA, RODRIGUEZ SAID HE HAD TALKED WITH MR. LANE, THE USG REPRESENTATIVE IN HAVANA, SOME TIME AGO AND THAT MR. LANE HAD ASKED ABOUT WITHDRAWAL OF ANGOLAN AND CUBAN TROOPS FROM THE NAMIBIAN BORDER. RODRIGUEZ SAID HE HAD TOLD LANE THAT THE CUBANS WOULD NOT TELL NETO WHAT TO DO. HOWEVER, THE CUBANS ARE CONVINCED THAT NETO WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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WITHDRAW IF HE HAD GUARANTEES THAT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD NOT ATTACK ANGOLA.

16. CUBA'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE ZIMBAWIAN AND SWAPO LEADERS WAS THAT THEY (THE CUBANS) WOULD SUPPORT WHATEVER SOLUTION THE NATIONALIST LEADERS DECIDED UPON. THE CUBANS WERE NOT INFLUENCING THEM TO FIGHT RATHER THAN NEGOTIATE.

17. AMBASSADOR YOUNG EXPLAINED THE WESTERN POSITION ON WALVIS BAY. RODRIGUEZ RESPONDED THAT SEPARATION OF WALVIS BAY FROM NAMIBIA POSED A PROBLEM OF PRINCIPLE FOR THE NAMIBIANS AND THE CUBANS AGREED WITH THEIR POSITION. AMBASSADOR YOUNG CONTINUED WITH HIS EXPLANATION SAYING THAT THE WESTERN POWERS SIMPLY COULD NOT GET SOUTH AFRICA TO GIVE UP WALVIS BAY AT THIS TIME. HE FELT, HOWEVER, THIS COULD BE DONE IN THE FUTURE, BECAUSE SOUTH AFRICA, HE BELIEVED, WANTS THE KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH NAMIBIA THAT IT HAS WITH MOZAMBIQUE.

18. RODRIGUEZ SAID HE WANTED TO SHIFT BACK TO US-CUBA RELATIONS WHICH THEY HAD TOUCHED ON AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING. HE THEN EMPHASIZED THAT THE US AND CUBA SHOULD AVOID ANNOYANCES IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP. HE REQUESTED THAT US LEADERS, IN JUDGING CUBAN POLICIES AND ACTIONS, BE CAREFUL TO BASE ITS JUDGE-

MENTS ON FACTS AND REALITY, NOT ON RUMORS AND SUSPICIONS. HE URGED THAT THE US EXAMINE CAREFULLY WHAT IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING IN AFRICA AND WHAT THE CUBANS ARE DOING.

19. CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF CUBA PROVIDING ARMED
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ASSISTANCE TO A GOVERNMENT OR TO THE ZIMBABWIAN NATIONALISTS, THE US COULD NOT EXPECT A BLANKET COMMITMENT IN ADVANCE THAT CUBA WOULD NOT PUT TROOPS INTO ZIMBABWE, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY INTEND TO SEND TROOPS. BUT TO MAKE SUCH A COMMITMENT PUBLICLY WOULD ONLY ENCOURAGE SMITH AND VORSTER TO CONTINUE TO HOLD OUT AND REFUSE ANY COMPROMISE. THE REALITY WAS, HOWEVER, THAT CUBA WOULD NOT MOVE ITS TROOPS FROM ANGOLA TO ZIMBABWE.

20. REDRIGUEZ EMPHASIZED THAT CUBA DID NOT WANT TO BE TREATED WITH A DOUBLE STANDARD BY THE UNITED STATES. IT WAS "INCOMPREHENSIBLE" THAT THE US SHOULD CONDONE FRENCH STATEMENTS THAT FRANCE WOULD REMAIN PERMANENTLY IN AFRICA WHILE CONDEMNING CUBA'S PRESENCE.

21. RODRIGUEZ SAID HE FEARED US LEADERS WERE "CREATING A FRANKENSTEIN" IN US PUBLIC OPINION WHICH WOULD MAKE IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOME TIME NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND CUBA. HE URGED THAT WE TRY TO IMPROVE THE POLITICAL AND EMOTIONAL CLIMATE SURROUNDING US-CUBAN RELATIONS.

22. THE SUBJECT OF SOVIET-CUBAN RELATIONS CAME UP AND RODRIGUEZ SAID THAT THE US SHOULD NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY US-CUBA AGREEMENTS WOULD BREAK CUBA'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION. THE MEETING ENDED ON THAT NOTE AS AMBASSADOR YOUNG EXCUSED HIMSELF TO ATTEND A MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE.

CORRECTED PARAGRAPH 18, SIXTH LINE, EIGHTH WORD SHOULD BE OMITTED.

CORRECTED PARAGRAPH 20, FIRST WORD SHOULD READ RODRIGUEZ.
YOUNG

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Message Attributes

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